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SUBJECT: UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL HOLMES BRIEFS THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON JOINT UN/GOS DARFUR ASSESSMENT

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¶11. (SBU) Summary: On March 26, U/SYG Holmes briefed the Security Council on the results of the recently-completed joint UN and Government of Sudan (GoS) assessment of humanitarian gaps in Darfur. Holmes told the Council that the assessment revealed the extent of the gaps in humanitarian services and the lack of capacity to cover them. He urged the GoS to reverse its decision and delineated steps that need to be taken to prevent further suffering. Ambassador DiCarlo called upon the GoS to reverse its decision as did Japan, Uganda, Mexico, the United Kingdom, and Burkina Faso. France and Austria emphasized that the GoS bears responsibility for the well being of the people of Darfur. Holmes promised to keep the Council fully informed on the humanitarian situation in Sudan in the future. End summary.

¶12. (SBU) Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes' brief to the Council on March 26 focused on the results of the recently completed joint UN/GoS assessment in Darfur of the gaps created by the GoS decision to shut down the operations of 13 international and 3 national NGOs. He indicated that, although some of the gaps in humanitarian assistance could be plugged in the short term, a lack of capacity on the ground would prevent effectively reconstituting the lost services. Holmes broke down the findings of the assessment by sector.

¶13. (SBU) In the food aid sector, Holmes said that the UN World Food Programme (WFP) managed an ad hoc distribution of rations for March and April through local food committees; however WFP needs experienced partners to ensure that future rations are delivered. Holmes said that local food committees do not have this expertise. Holmes also stated that emergency resources deployed by the GoS, UN and national NGOs to maintain water systems for more than 800,000 people could become increasingly ineffective within four weeks. Holmes indicated that serious gaps in sanitation services have developed. He said that latrines needed to be built in Zam Zam camp for the 40,000 displaced persons who arrived in recent weeks due to fighting in South Darfur. Holmes observed that existing latrines in camps could start to overflow without proper maintenance, threatening the spread of diseases and that the rainy season which starts in May would further complicate matters. As to health care, Holmes said the departure of the N GoS from Darfur left 650,000 people with lower levels of access to basic health services. He indicated that, while the

GoS Ministry of Health and the UN World Health Organization (WHO) were attempting to fill the gaps, the sustainability of their response was in question.

¶15. (U) Holmes said that the GoS's brutal treatment of aid workers, coupled with the GoS decision to ignore existing administrative and legal frameworks governing relief work had created an atmosphere of mistrust that needed to be addressed and that negative media reporting about foreign NGOs further diminished aid workers' security. Holmes said that the GoS continues to delay the approval of technical agreements (only 7% have been signed by the GoS) that would allow the remaining NGOs to function in Sudan

¶16. (SBU) Holmes finished by laying out a number of next steps that should take place now that the assessment report has been released. He called for continued efforts to identify and fill critical gaps in life-saving assistance while discussions take place to re-establish the ground rules under which humanitarian operations take place in Sudan.

¶17. (SBU) Ambassador DiCarlo highlighted the fact that the joint assessment indicates significant gaps in the delivery of essential services to vulnerable population of Darfur. She urged the GoS to reverse its decision to expel NGOs and facilitate the work of the remaining aid agencies. Ambassador DiCarlo noted that the GoS actions have undermined the progress made in the Qatar peace talks and threatened the stability of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

¶18. (SBU) Japan noted that the joint UN/GoS report reinforced its own conclusions that the expulsion of the NGOs created a grave situation with major gaps in assistance to Darfur's vulnerable populations. Japan believed that the Council

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should give its full attention to this matter since the humanitarian situation in all of Sudan has been impacted by the expulsion order. Japan strongly urged the GoS to reverse its decision on the expulsions and noted that other unspecified steps might have to be taken to stop the humanitarian crisis.

¶19. (SBU) Uganda called on the GoS to reverse its decision on the expulsion of NGOs and urged the UN to use its contact with the GoS to push this as well. Uganda's ambassador described the joint UN/GoS assessment as a credible document that could be used to mobilize support for addressing current needs in Darfur. He noted that humanitarian work cannot be divorced from the peace process and advocated for greater efforts to move Darfur's peace process along.

¶10. (SBU) Mexico expressed its concern over the humanitarian situation in Sudan and the possibility that it could deteriorate in the coming months. Mexico noted that the best way forward would be for the GoS to reverse its decision to expel the NGOs. Mexico stated that it was inappropriate to make a linkage between the humanitarian work of the NGOs and the International Criminal Court (ICC).

¶11. (SBU) The United Kingdom noted that the expulsion of the NGOs left millions of people in a vulnerable position and termed the situation grave. The United Kingdom said that the expulsions are unacceptable and that by co-authoring the report, the GoS acknowledged that their actions may create a humanitarian crisis.

¶12. (SBU) China took note of the joint assessment report and expressed concern over the current situation in Darfur. China hoped that the UN would communicate better with the GoS to ensure that the needs of civilians in Darfur are met. China expressed its view that the Council discuss a comprehensive solution to the problems of Darfur in order to facilitate humanitarian assistance.

¶13. (SBU) Burkina Faso stated that the report from the joint

assessment underlined the importance of the work of the NGOs and that their expulsion undermined assistance to internally displaced persons. Burkina Faso described the GoS efforts to nationalize the aid operation as far from convincing and that they could lead to a humanitarian disaster. Burkina Faso recommended that the GoS reconsider its decision to expel the humanitarian aid agencies.

¶14. (U) The Council agreed to the following elements of a press statement linked to Holmes' briefing: stressing the importance of continuing the distribution of humanitarian aid; taking note of the assessment mission and urging the GoS to continue cooperating with the UN and humanitarian organizations; and appealing to the GoS to reconsider its decision of suspending the activities of some NGOs in Sudan.
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